Flashback

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FLASHBACK

Journal of the Washington County Historical Society
Preserving Our Past for Future Generations

Volume 65 Winter 2015 Number 4

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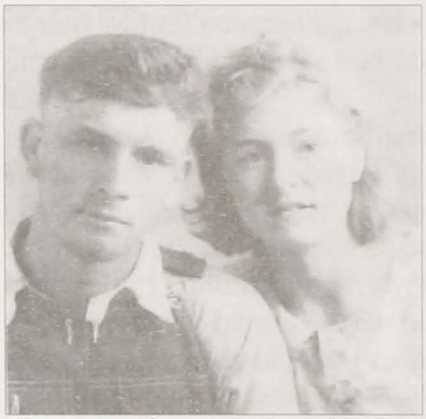


Photo courtesy of Gary and Barbara Johnson

On the Cover: Lester and Opal Claypool, shortly after their wedding on Oct. 7, 1933. They are the parents of Shirley Davis, Donna Luther and Barbara Johnson. The story of how their family came to America and settled in the Steele Community near Tontitown begins on Page 147.

The Claypools of Steele Community

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article about the Claypool family of the Steele Community was the winner of the 2015 Lemke Prize.

By Gary W. Johnson

My wife's family lived for many years around the Steele Community south of Tontitown, Arkansas. Lester and Opal Claypool, my wife's parents, were like a lot of people in this area, poor, honest and hard working. Their simple ambition in life was to raise their three girls and one boy as well as their income would allow. Although there was never any surplus of money, they managed to provide them with a good roof over their heads, put food on the table and give them an education in the Springdale school system.

Until they both retired and moved to Bentonville to live on property owned by their oldest daughter, they never lived very far from the operations of Arbor Acres. The two houses they occupied while I courted their daughter Barbara were owned by Arbor Acres. They never had the privilege of owning their own home.

Arbor Acres was a commercial egg operation at the Steele Community. It was managed by Jerry Hinshaw during its more prosperous years. Lester worked with the farm operations doing whatever maintenance or building projects were needed to keep things running smoothly. Opal worked in the commercial egg processing plant. People liked the Claypools. However, no one ever considered them to be anything other than friendly, modest people with strong backs and calloused hands. No one

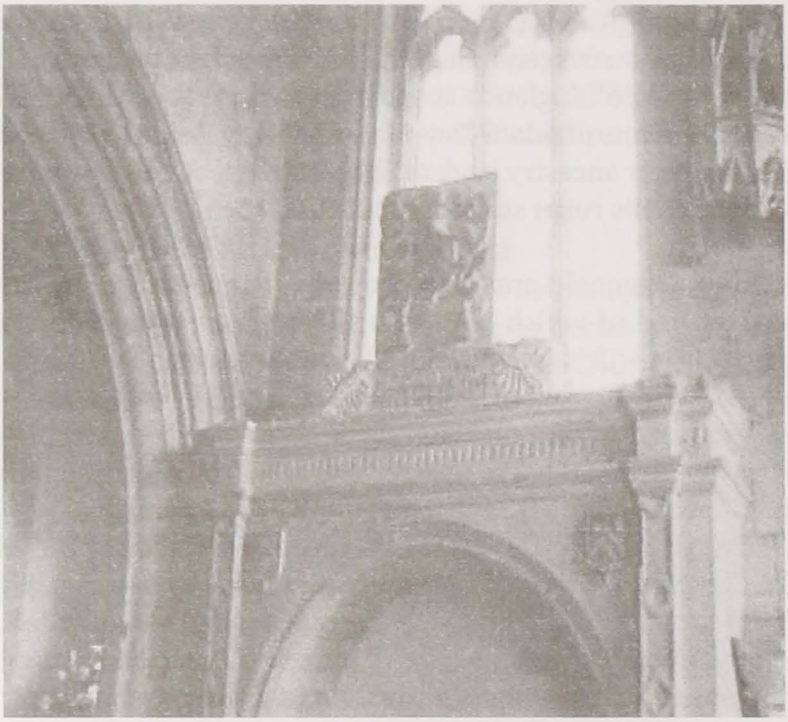
The Claypoole Manor, as seen through the gatehouse.

ever suspected that the Claypool family had, at one time, a rich, storied history that spanned centuries.

The Claypools of Old England

The Claypool family can trace their ancestry back to some of the earliest periods in England. Their family name was originally Claypoole. The name is derived from the Gaelic term "cleigh-pull," which means sword handle and it originates from the Scottish lowlands. One of the more notable ancestors of the Claypools was James Claypoole, Esquire, who was born in 1532 in Norborough, Northampton, England. Norborough is a small village approximately ninety miles north of London. James Claypoole owned one of the largest manor houses in England, which is known to this day as the Claypoole Manor. The house was built in 1333 or 1334 by Roger de Norburgh, Bishop of Lichfield.

The Anglican Church was not only powerful in early English history, it was evidently very wealthy. The Claypoole family oc-



The Claypoole Memorial at St. Andrews.

cupied the Claypoole Manor for 100 years.

The Claypoole Manor was at one time a highly fortified estate with walls and several surrounding structures. Most of that fortification has been removed.

James Claypoole, who purchased the Claypoole Manor, was a wealthy and important man in that period of time. He died in 1599 and is buried at St. Andrews Church in Peterborough, a larger city a few miles south of Norborough. Being an important person, he has a memorial inside St. Andrews dedicated to his memory. The memorial displays the Claypoole coat of arms in three places around the memorial.

James Claypoole before he died had 13 children. One of his

sons, Adam Claypoole who was a direct ancestor of the Claypools of Washington County, married Lady Dorothy Wingfield. Lady Wingfield was a descendent of English royalty dating back to the earliest times of England. Thus, as improbable as it may seem, the descendents of Adam Claypoole and Lady Dorothy Wingfield can trace their ancestry back to Egbert the Great, the first king of all England. His reign started in 800 A.D.

———

Adam Claypoole and Lady Dorothy Wingfield had thirteen children, one of which was John Claypool, another direct ancestor of my wife's family. John Claypoole became Sir Knight of Latham, John Claypoole. John Claypool and his wife Mary Angell also had thirteen children. Three of their children migrated to the new world. One of those who sailed to America was my wife's ancestor James Claypoole.

Lord John Claypoole was another son of Sir Knight of Latham, John Claypool and Mary Angell. He never made it to America but he had a very interesting life in England while he continued to occupy the Claypoole Manor. Lord John was described as a wild and somewhat irresponsible man. He had, however, served his country well in the Parliamentary Army at the Battle of Newark in 1645. Lord John had the distinction of marrying Elizabeth Cromwell, daughter of Lord Oliver Cromwell.

In 1649, the monarchy of King Charles I was overthrown and Charles was beheaded. Oliver Cromwell was a powerful man during this civil war and was instrumental in overthrowing King Charles I. Lord Cromwell gave his new son-in-law the titles of Lord of the Bedchamber, Master of the Horse and Ranger of-Whittlewood Forest. In 1657, Lord John, the new son-in-law, was called to serve in the House of Parliament.

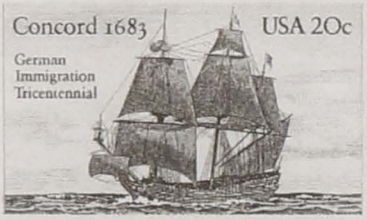
Oliver Cromwell died in 1658. After the monarchy was restored in 1660 and Charles II was seated on the thrown, Oliver Cromwell was dug up, hung in chains and beheaded. Those who were most responsible for the death of Charles I were disemboweled and drawn and quartered. Somehow, Lord John Claypoole escaped the wrath and revenge of the monarchy. He returned to

the Claypoole Manor bringing his wife and his mother-in-law, the widow of Lord Cromwell.

A few years ago the *Wall Street Journal* ran a story about the 700-year-old manor house being for sale for $2.75 million, complete with its own ghost. The ghost of Oliver Cromwell is said to roam the halls of the Claypool Manor.

The Claypooles in Early America

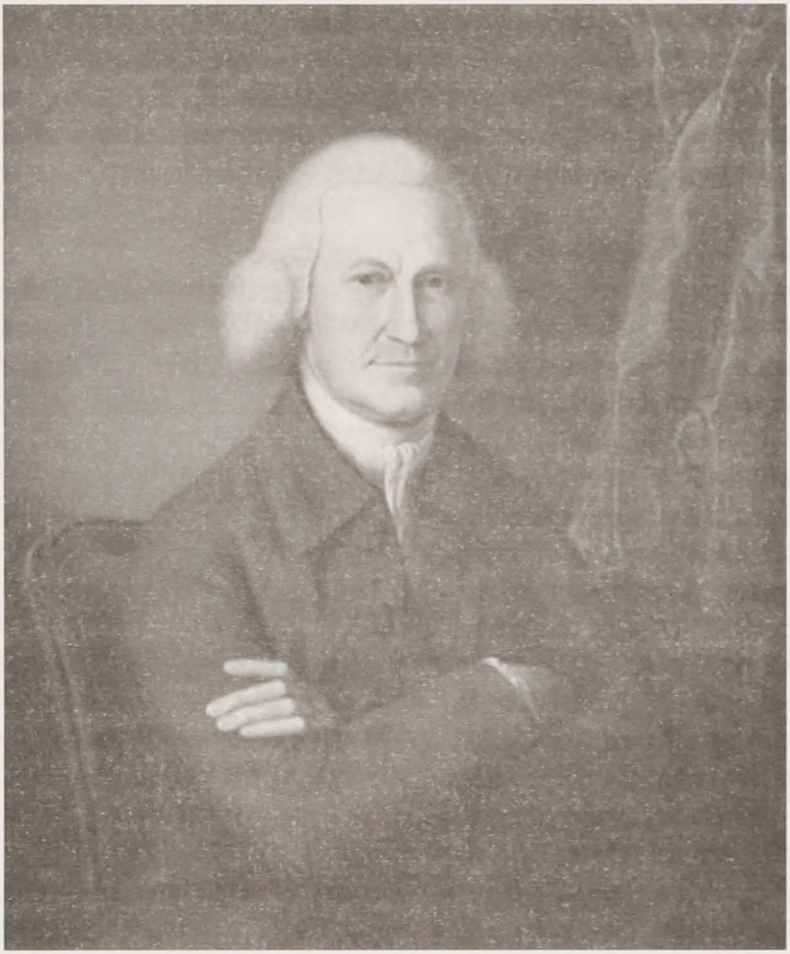
James Claypoole, son of Sir Knight of Latham John Claypoole and Mary Angell was born in 1634. James became a successful merchant in England. He converted from the Church of England to the Quaker faith. He became friends with William Penn and frequently entertained members of the Society of Friends. Like many Quakers, James was persecuted for this faith. When authorities locked the doors of the Gracechurch Street Meeting on April 8, 1682, James Claypoole responded by preaching to the congregation in the street. He was summarily arrested, fined, and imprisoned for seventeen days. Such persecution compelled many English Quakers to find a new beginning in America.



Stamp commemorating the 1683 Concord crossing.

James Claypoole had an invitation from William Penn to join him in America. James purchased 5000 acres of land in Pennsylvania in 1681 and another 5000 acres in 1683. After his initial purchase, he sent servants to plant a garden, buy livestock, and build a house on the town lot he received for being one of the original participants in Penn's new experiment.

James Claypool sailed on the ship Concord in 1683 to America along with his wife, his seven children and five servants. When they arrived, the Claypooles received a warm welcome



A portrait of James Claypoole by Charles Willson Peale.

from William Penn, their Quaker friends, and the servants who had recently built him a house like a barn, without a chimney. Measuring forty feet by twenty feet, James' residence had a dry cellar and proved to be a good structure for housing his family. The following spring, he built a proper house, reputedly the first brick house in Philadelphia. It was a double two-story brick

house, had four leaden-framed windows in front, and the same in the rear ... with a beautiful south exposure, down a descending green into the pleasant Dock Creek.

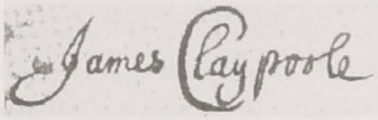
James Claypoole

In Spite of his considerable resources and his social connections, James Claypoole at times struggled in America. He was an ambitious man and as such he was frequently frowned upon by his Quaker brethren. They considered his pursuit of public positions embarrassing. However, he eventually served as a judge of the Provincial Court and Register General and was poised to be one of five governors of the colony when he died in 1687.

Christ's Church in the historic district of Philadelphia James Claypoole was laid to rest in the old historic Christ's Church on Arch Street in Philadelphia. If you explore the Christ's Church burial ground, you will fmd it to be the final resting place of war heroes and five signers of the Declaration of Independence.

Christ's Church at Philadelphia, where James Claypoole is buried.

In one of the front corners is the final resting place of Benjamin Franklin. What you will not find is a headstone dedicated to James Claypoole. Some Quakers in those days did not use headstones as they considered them ostentatious.



Claypoole's signature.

James Claypoole in spite of the disapproval at times of his Quaker brethren, was an important figure in early Philadelphia. He was a successful merchant. He was a magistrate in the courts of Philadelphia and his was the second signature on the Pennsylvania Charter just after that of William Penn.

The Westward Migration of the Claypooles

The descendents of James Claypoole of Philadelphia began a western migration after his death. James Claypoole who bravely sailed for America with his family on the Concord had the following descendents who were part of the western movement: James Claypoole born in 1664 in Sussex County, Delaware died in 1704 in New Castle County, Delaware. He had a son, also named James Claypoole, who was born in 1701 in Rockingham County, Virginia. This descendent, who was born in 1701, died in 1789 in the Lost River area of Hardy County, Virginia. James Claypoole, born in 1701, had a son was named John Claypoole who was born in 1732 in the Lost River area of Hardy County, Virginia (now West Virginia). He died in 1823 in Hardy County. All of these men were direct ancestors of the Claypools of Washington County, Arkansas.

John Claypoole's father, James, was a weaver by trade. The following piece is from the Archives and Histories of West Virginia. It is part of a larger story written by F. B. Chrisman in 1925.

"The first settlers had very few conveniences. Their houses were built of logs with clapboard roofs and either dirt or puncheon floors. Iron pots, knives and forks along with salt and iron

Left, the headstone of James Claypoole, born 1701. Center, the headstone of John Claypool, born 1732. Right, the headstone of John's wife, Rachel Claypoole. They are buried at Miller Cemetery, Hardy County, West Virginia.

were brought on pack horses at first from Fredericksburg and later (after they got wagons) from Alexandria. The furniture for the table for several years after the settlement consisted of a few pewter dishes, plates, and spoons, but mostly of wooden bowls, trenchers, moggins, gourds and hard shelled squashes.

Along in the early part of 1800, Lionel Branson and Jeremiah Inskeep each built brick houses the latter of which is still being used as a residence. In 1808 Squire Jacob Miller built a brick house which is still in a good state of preservation and is now owned and used as a residence by Chas. A. Garrett. The oldest log house, a part of which is still standing is the old Claypoole house on the lands now owned by John Moyers. This farm was settled by John Claypoole, a son of James Claypoole, an English Quaker who was born February 14th, 1701, and settled in what is now Rockingham County, Virginia. John Claypoole was born in 1732, was married twice, and was the father of twenty-two children."

The Lost River Area of Hardy County, West Virginia

The Lost River is approximately thirty-one miles long. It dis-

appears into an underground channel near Baker, West Virginia and reappears near Wardensville as the Cacapon River.

The area of Lost River is only a couple of hours from Washington, D. C. and it has become a vacation retreat for people who live in the nation's capitol. It has also developed into a noted wine making region. The French and Indian wars of the 1700s were the result of English citizens rapidly moving into the territories owned by the French. The westward expansion of the settlers from the colonies resulted in much of this land being populated by English citizens. This inevitably led to the French and Indian wars. Major George Washington was an integral part of these battles.

LOST RIVER
Settled before 1750. Near by
was Riddle's Fort, frontier
outpost. Here Battle of Lost
River was fought in 1756
between company of Virginia
frontiersmen under Captain
Jeremiah Smith and band of
50 French and Indians.

A historic marker describing Fort Riddle and the battle fought nearby.

Fort Riddle was a small stockade fort on Lost River, in the Lost River District of Hardy County. Near it a fierce and bloody battle was fought in 1756 between a body of fifty French and Indians and a company of Virginia frontiersmen under Captain Jeremiah Smith. John Claypoole would have been about twenty-three during this war. His father James would have been about fifty-five, his brother William about twenty-six and his brother Joseph about twenty-one. The Claypooles living in the middle of this area in 1756 would have fought in this bloody conflict.

John Claypoole, as mentioned in the piece above, had twenty-two children. One of his sons was George Claypool, another direct ancestor of my wife's family. George continued the western migration of the Claypools. George was born in the Lost River District of Hardy County in 1782. He married Anna Hicks and they eventually moved to Vinton County, Ohio. George and Anna

had seven children, one of which was Alexander Claypool who was born in 1802 in Greenbrier County, Virginia.

During the Civil War, the western part of Virginia did not want to secede from the Union nor be associated with those states that had seceded. The United States government granted their wish and created the state of West Virginia. West Virginia became the thirty-fourth star on the Union flag. Before this event in history, those counties and towns that eventually became part of West Virginia were officially part of Virginia. Greenbrier County, West Virginia is currently home to the world renowned Greenbrier Resort and Spa at White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia.

George Claypool died in 1844 in Vinton County, Ohio. There is a tombstone in the Old McArthur Cemetery of Vinton that belongs to Anna Hix Claypool. Anna died approximately nineteen years before George. Some records state that George is also buried in the Old McArthur Cemetery but we can find no tombstone for him.

Alexander Claypool, son of George Claypool, married Jane Cox and moved with his family to Vinton County, Ohio. The 1850 census in Vinton County, Ohio lists Alexander Claypool as a farmer with 400 acres. Alexander Claypool's children are all listed on the 1850 census including Wesley Claypool, my wife's great grandfather, who is listed as one year old.

Some accounts state that Alexander Claypool died in Vinton County, Ohio. Those accounts are wrong. The 1880 census in Polk County, Missouri lists an Allen Claypool, age 34. He is listed as a farmer. Living in his household are his wife Dora, age 18; his father Alexander, age 68; his mother Jane, age 69. Allen is one of Alexander's children and all the ages are exactly right. So, Alexander moved to Missouri sometime after 1850. Bolivar, Missouri is the county seat of Polk County with Springfield serving as a major metropolitan area.

The Claypools of Washington County, Arkansas

Wesley Claypool, my wife's great grandfather was one of seven children born to Alexander and Jane Claypool. He was born in

The sons of Wesley E. Claypool. Seated from left: George and Winfield Scott; standing: James, Sam and John.

1849 in Vinton County, Ohio.

Wesley Claypool is listed on the 1880 census in Halfway, Polk County, Missouri. He is thirty-one years old. He is listed as a farmer. In the census are his wife Louisa Jane, age twenty-five; Edward, age six; George, age three; Winfield Scott, age three months. Therefore, it is safe to assume that Winfield Scott Claypool, my wife's grandfather was born in Polk County, Missouri. Wesley Claypool married Louisa Jane Cotherill in Washington County, Arkansas in 1873. He died in 1901 in Washington County, Arkansas.

Wesley Claypool, according to one report, was a carpenter and a school teacher at Stony Point School in Washington

The wives of the sons, from left, Bertie, who was married to George; Myrtle, who was married to Winfield Scott; Beulah, who was married to Sam; Bertie, who was married to James; and Bertha, who was married to John.

County, Arkansas. He is undoubtedly also a Washington County farmer. Wesley and Louisa Jane Cotherill Claypool are buried in the Stuckey Cemetery close to Johnson, Arkansas.

Winfield Scott Claypool was my wife's grandfather. He was born in 1880 in Polk County, Missouri. He died December 29, 1930 in Washington County, Arkansas. Winfield Scott Claypool married Lillie Myrtle Kisner on June 29, 1901 in Taney County, Missouri.

Myrtle Kisner Claypool's parents are an interesting story.

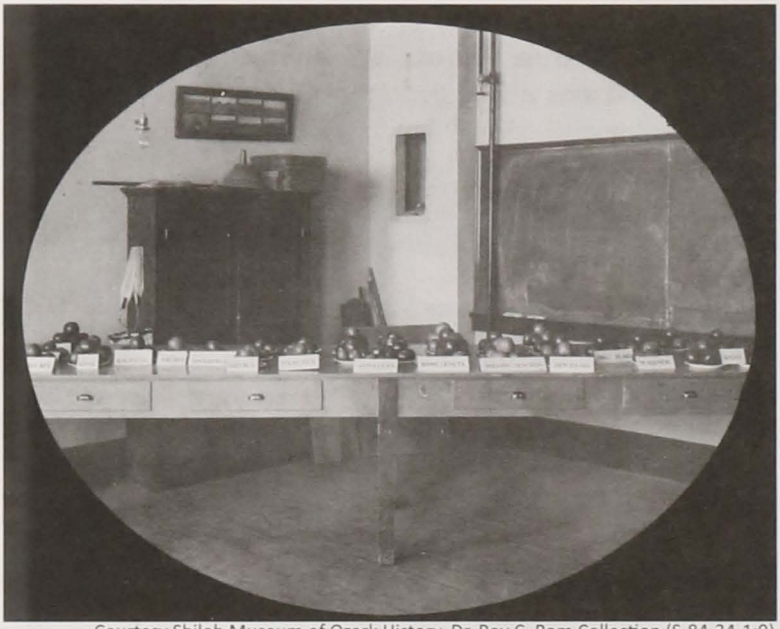
Courtesy Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, P.J. Smith Jr. Collection (S-87-259-19)

Loading apples on the Frisco Railroad's refrigerator cars, Springdale, 1910s.

Her mother was Eliza Ann Johnson, born in 1853, died 1921 in Washington County, Arkansas. Her father was George Kistner (later changed to Kisner), born in Silverhausen, Germany in 1837. He departed Bremen, Germany and arrived December 15, 1847 in Baltimore, Maryland. He died in 1892 in Washington County, Arkansas. So, the children of Winfield Scott Claypool and Myrtle Kisner Claypool are one-quarter German. Perhaps, that explains the prevalence of blond hair among the Claypool Children. George and Eliza Ann Johnson Kisner are buried in the Stuckey Cemetery close to Johnson, Arkansas.

On June 28, 1918, Winfield Scott Claypool purchased forty acres at the Steele Community from Doctor Otey Miller. The purchase price for the acreage was $950 with $50.00 down and annual payments of $100 thereafter until paid in full. Winfield Scott Claypool went into the apple business. He planted apple trees and harvested the apples. He established what must have been a good business and a good lifestyle for his family.

It was May of 1872 when Shiloh, Arkansas was renamed



Courtesy Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Dr. Roy C. Rom Collection (S-84-34-1:9)

Arkansas Black, Ben Davis, and other apple varieties, probably at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, 1900s.

Springdale. Nine years later the railroad came to Springdale and it provided a tremendous boon to the fruit industry in Northwest Arkansas, especially apples. Apples could be shipped by train from Northwest Arkansas to anywhere in the country and even Canada. The apple orchard business flourished. By 1920 more apples were shipped from Springdale, Arkansas than anywhere else in the state. This quote from a lady was published in the *Rogers Daily News* with a date of July 1, 1907, " ... acres of apple trees in such long rows one cannot see the end of them, just long streaks of vivid red and green ... They will surely bring to the farmers a mint of money."

Winfield Scott Claypool suffered an untimely death on December 29, 1930. *The Springdale News* regularly ran news clips from the Steele Community and on December 16, 1930 a clip an-

Winfield Scott Claypool in front of his apple shed.

nounced that Scott Claypool was slowly recovering from pneumonia but would not be up for some time. Evidently, people who knew him referred to him as Scott Claypool. Approximately two weeks later, the news from the Steele Community announced that Scott Claypool had died after suffering almost a month from pneumonia and heart trouble. He was only fifty-one years of age. He must have been considered a prominent man in the area. On January 7, 1931, Myrtle Claypool received a letter from Arkansas Congressman Claude A. Fuller expressing his condolences upon hearing the news of Scott Claypool's passing.

The Claypools were in the apple orchard business and undoubtedly they prospered with the rest of the farmers who engaged in that business. Winfield Scott built a grand house for

his family on his property. It was two stories with a grand porch and a grand staircase at the front. We are not sure when the house was built but obviously it was built after June of 1918 and well before December of 1930. When my wife and I were younger we sometimes visited this home. The furnishings were impressive but they belonged in an era about three or four decades earlier. The house was built before running water and electricity were prevalent in that area of Washington County. Therefore, the house had no electricity or running water. The house was lighted by kerosene lanterns, warmed by wood fires and water was available from a well just behind the back porch.

About 1920 was the peak of the apple business in Northwest Arkansas and it began to decline after that. The great depression as well as the dust bowl era surely hurt the farmers. A portion of the apple production, prior to prohibition, made its way into the distilling of hard cider which was routinely used by people in the early 1900s. How much prohibition hurt the apple business is hard to estimate. By December of 1930, Winfield Scott Claypool was dead and his business undoubtedly suffered. It has always been a mystery to me that none of Winfield Scott's boys took over the apple orchard business and continued on in their father's footsteps. Perhaps it was because many of the children became dispersed around Washington County and as far away as California.

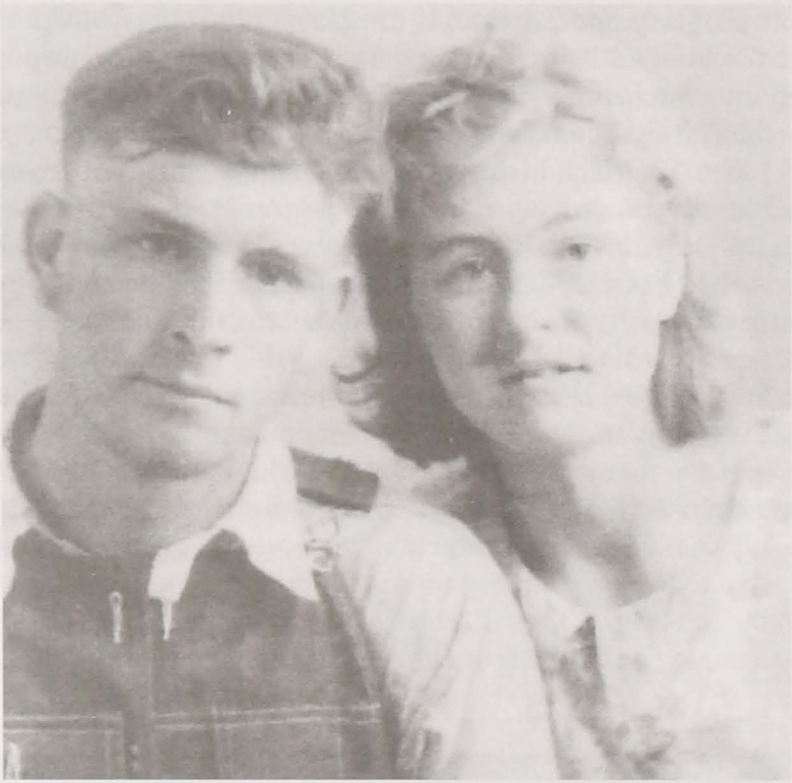
Myrtle continued to provide a home for her children after Winfield Scott passed away. She, however, only lived a few more years. She died on May 16, 1935. She was only fifty-four years old. Five of the children of Winfield Scott and Myrtle were married before Myrtle's untimely death. Three of the daughters and

The children of Winfield Scott Claypool, from left to right: Mildred, Osie, Roy, Mother Myrtle, Tommie, Lloyd, Clarence, Lily, Charles Lester, Ethel Doreen, taken about 1935.

one son were unmarried at the time of her death. The oldest daughter, Lily, would have been thirty years old and unmarried at the time. Lily was left with the task of holding her family together and she took the responsibility for raising the youngest children. Winfield Scott and Myrtle Kisner Claypool are buried in the Stuckey Cemetery close to Johnson, Arkansas.

They Claypools continued to hang on to their property and their childhood home until the late 1970s. The brothers who still lived in Arkansas seemed to work at one agricultural job or another. One daughter died in 1941 before she could marry. One daughter married in 1948. Lily, my wife's unmarried aunt, continued to live on the property and refused to leave, even though the old house had no electricity or running water. Lily's brother Lloyd remained at the house as long as his sister lived there. He was unmarried and could have readily moved anywhere. However, he refused to leave his sister alone in the big, dusty and drafty old house.

To me, part of the mystery of the old house was that it had



Lester and Opal Claypool, shortly after their wedding on Oct. 7, 1933. They were the parents of Shirley Davis, Donna Luther and Barbara Johnson, the author's wife.

a historic, eerie feel like something out of an old Bette Davis movie. It was so isolated, yet people continued to live there. The house was not visible from any road. To get to the house you had to travel across the dam for Hinshaw's lake, travel toward Hinshaw's house on top of the hill, then veer off through a barbed wire gate and then down a seldom used lane until you arrived in front of this imposing structure.

Aunt Lily died June 11, 1979 at her home. She had lived there for most of her seventy-four years. When Lily died, her brother

Lloyd immediately moved. The Hinshaw family owned the adjacent property and purchased the Claypool property. Evidently the Claypool's did not receive a large sum of money for the property but the brothers and sisters each got a share of the proceeds. The old home was demolished.

I love American history. I love the family stories of courage and perseverance as our ancestors migrated west during periods of hardship and difficulties. I was saddened to hear the old house had been torn down. It was a part of the Claypool family history. Entering the house was like walking through a time portal into a world that existed decades ago.

Mr. and Mrs. Lester Claypool of Bentonville celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with a reception at the Holiday Inn in Springdale, Arkansas, October 9, 1983. The event was hosted by their children, Shirley Davis, Barbara Johnson and Donna Luther.

When my wife's parents finally retired, they moved to Bentonville to live on property owned by their oldest daughter. The family celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary in 1983. The couple had raised four children including a son who died in

The Hinshaw property at Steele Community in Washington County.

a tragic automobile accident in 1978. Lester only lasted a little more than a year after the above picture was taken. He died December 13, 1984. Opal died on September 9, 1999 while living at an assisted living facility in Springdale. Lester and Opal Allen Claypool are buried in the Stuckey Cemetery close to Johnson along with their son, Charles.

The photograph on the opposite page showing the picturesque home of the Hinshaws is a Washington County landmark. People often give directions based upon this property such as "turn up the hill across from the Hinshaw lake" or "turn east past the white bull". I have given or received such directions in the past. Few people have any knowledge of the mysterious old house that was hidden on the other side of the lake and through the trees, beyond the Hinshaw property. Few people have any knowledge of the rich family history that belonged to the people who lived in that mysterious old house.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following story appeared in the Fayetteville Daily Democrat *on January 27, 1916.*

A.N. Cole's Warehouse At Winslow Burns

A. N. Cole today received advices that a fire at his grain and feed warehouse at Winslow last night resulted in a total loss. Mr. Cole this morning estimated his loss at about $700 and was not certain as to whether he had insurance on the building and contents.

The cause of the fire has not been definitely learned.

Old Age Just Ain't Working Out: The Life and Times of Former Washington County Sheriff Lee Owen

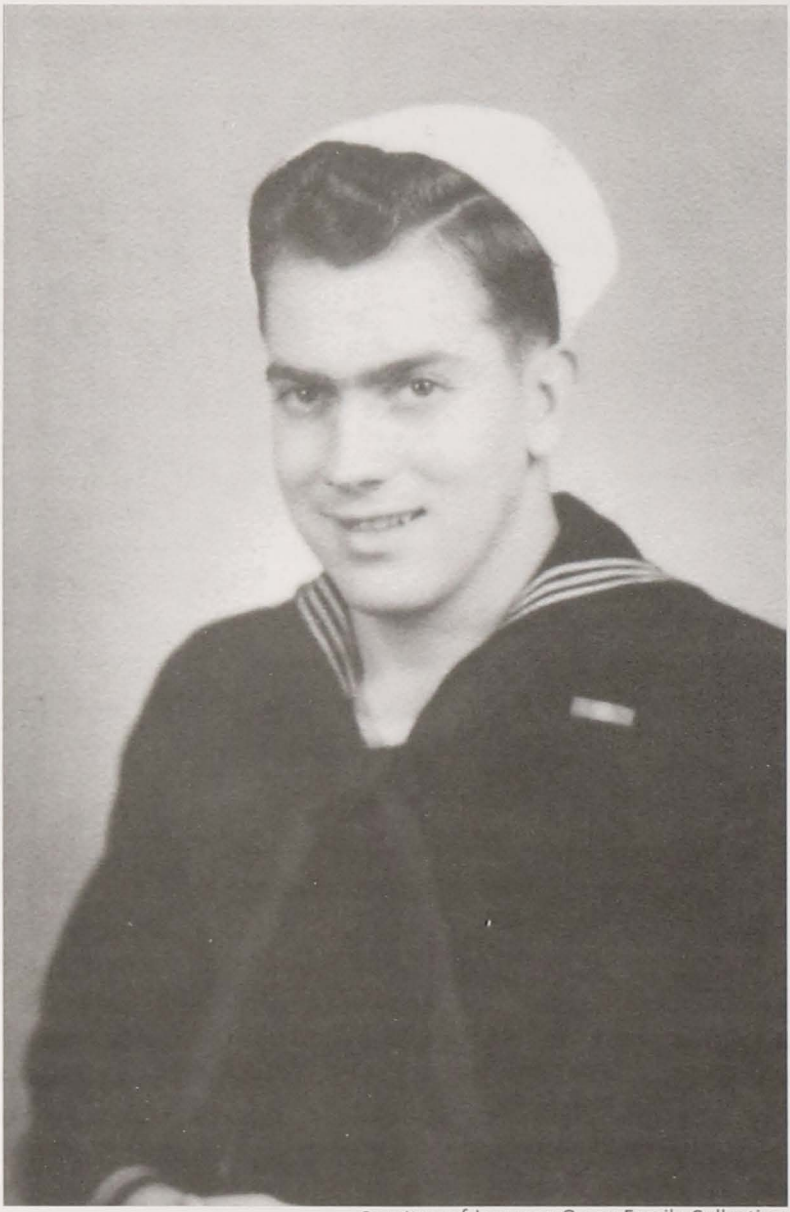
By Sophia Estes

Singer, guitarist, songwriter and retired Washington County Sheriff Lee Owen, now 81, recently sat down for a series of interviews in which he looked back on his life and career choices during some 50 years of public service.[1] This man, possibly the most prestigious sheriff Washington County has ever had, has a story worth sharing. Although Owen was sheriff for only eight months, he worked in law enforcement for 48 years, retiring after completing his term in Washington County in 2005.

Owen and his wife of 57 years, Pat, opened their Fayetteville home for hours of conversation. The interviews took place in the family den, which was decorated with framed newspaper articles, family and professional pictures, endless plaques and awards, along with hand crafted gifts with stories of their own.

Owen is a warm family man with an upbeat personality, a deep baritone voice and a very admirable story—one of persistence, perseverance and hard work—quite a professional, personal and family history indeed. He and his wife talked about their courtship and marriage, comical moments in his career, the challenges and changes in law enforcement communication over the years. They both spoke with great pride of their life's achievements.

Owen's father was a farmer, a preacher, and a musician who played with a local band and taught singing, guitar and piano lessons. Lee, the youngest of three children, was born on a 30-



Courtesy of Jauwana Owen Family Collection

Lee Owen during his U.S. Navy days.

acre farm in Lowell, Arkansas, in 1934. He helped on the family farm and learned the importance of hard work, family and Christian values.

As a child, Owen attended a one-room country school, Center Corner, until it consolidated with the Rogers public school system. The boy had trouble adjusting to the larger school. By the 8th grade, after he had missed weeks of school work due to complications after a tonsillectomy, Owen elected to end his education at the age of 15. It was not uncommon during this era, of course, for young people to complete only the first eight grades of school before becoming part of the work force.

Owen's father let the boy raise a few head of cattle and work on the family farm in Lowell. His father gave him acreage to grow tomatoes and the first season was successful. He made $100 selling tomatoes and was very proud and determined to grow more. The next year, his father and also an aunt gave him more land to work; however, that year "blight" took his tomato crop and he decided that perhaps he should not invest in farming any longer.

At age 16 he gained employment with a local auto parts store earning $30 a week. A year later, he went to work for the Cave Springs Motor Company as a mechanic's helper making $50 a week. At age 18, Owen registered for the draft. During the Korean War, he served four years active duty, 1952-1956, in the U.S. Navy and completed his high school diploma by taking his GED. After his discharge, he served another four years in the Naval Reserve.

During his active-duty years, his first military assignment was working in a crash and rescue unit at Alameda Naval Air Station in California. He was assigned to an aircraft carrier, the U.S.S. Kearsarge CVA 33, and served as a Gunner's Mate 3rd Class for 27 months. This training proved to be beneficial in the start of his career years later.

During his time on the ship, he bought a Japanese guitar and often played and wrote songs. He also wrote letters to family members and his aunt told him of a young woman who might be a good "pen pal." So Owen met Patricia Howard in a letter. Later

Courtesy of Jauwana Owen Family Collection

Lee and Patricia Owen at their wedding reception.

he received a photograph and thought she was very pretty.

Patricia was raised in a remote rural area on the backroads near Westville, Oklahoma. She and Lee wrote often for several months and just before his first 30-day leave, he sent a letter asking her if she would like to meet him while he was visiting family in nearby Arkansas. He explained he'd like to take her to dinner or a movie, but when there was no response and no return letter he did not try to contact her.

When his leave ended and after he had boarded his ship for another year, he found that Patricia had written, but the letter hadn't reached him before he left. The letter said that she did

want to meet him. This saddened Owen, "I felt disappointed and deflated, but encouraged that we could still communicate" as their correspondence continued. The year on the Kearsage finally ended and he sent another letter asking if she would be interested in meeting him while he was home on leave once again. This time, just as before, there was no return letter, no response. But he knew she lived three miles from where she picked up her mail and that she didn't check it daily. He was determined not to let another leave go by without seeing her.

His cousin, Mayme Cox, took him to the Howard's home. Owen laughed as he told how he might never have found the rural home had he not been guided by a family member. At last he saw Patricia walk out to greet him. He still remembers the turquoise dress she wore and how the sun shone on her long blonde hair. She was, by far, the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen.

Owen and Patricia went to dinner and a movie that evening, accompanied by his cousin. When they reached the theatre, they also found her mother, father and several other family members seated two rows behind them.

At the end of the evening, Owen asked for another date the next night, but Patricia said that was the night she was to spend with her grandmother, the following night had another obligation, the next another. Patricia finally explained that she was dating a man from Kansas but she wished Owen well and bid him goodbye.

Upon his discharge in 1956, Owen decided to stay in California. Due to his crash and rescue work in the Navy, he landed a firefighting job with the city of Upland, California. The police and fire departments worked together as one unit; the firemen dispatched for the police department. He remembers the first fire he was called to was a couch fire. The couch was ablaze, but after getting all the hoses to a hydrant and running them inside, the fire was put out with an extinguisher. He liked working for the police, he said, and that it seemed a much better fit for him.

While working for the fire and police department, he dated a

Courtesy of Jauwana Owen Family Collection

Lee and Patricia Owen.

few women but no one seriously. He often thought of his pen pal, Patricia. Owen now earned a three-week vacation every year. Before he took his vacation, he wrote Patricia one more letter. To his surprise, this time he got a letter in return. "Pat" told him that she and the boyfriend had broken up and she would love to see him if he'd like to visit.

Owen's words describing that visit were: "it all clicked for us." He immediately wanted to marry her. Pat wasn't so sure. She thought she did and then would think again. He talked to her father who wanted them to wait. Her mother couldn't even discuss it and both sets of parents seemed to think they were rushing into things. Owen was insistent, but agreed to wait. He vowed to go back to California and send her money to join him later.

Pat became an employee of Southwestern Bell Telephone Company. Her parents were opposed to her moving to California. Owen eventually quit his job and came back. His father

performed the ceremony and they were married at her family home. Pat baked her own wedding cake on a three-legged wood stove. After the wedding, the couple went on a three-week honeymoon travelling Route 66 to the Grand Canyon, San Diego Zoo, and Carlsbad Caverns, among other memorable sites.

Owen was happy, his persistence had paid off; however, he was unemployed and needed work. Pat suggested they drive to nearby Siloam Springs, population 3,700 in 1958. She thought he should apply with the fire and police department. They drove to the city office where Owen went inside to apply and found he had interrupted a game of dominoes between the police chief and the fire chief. He was told to wait until the game was over and he did—only to be told they "didn't have anything" at the moment. After leaving his address, since he had no phone, his job search continued. He applied at Heekin Can Company, a parts store and wherever he thought he might find work.

Weeks went by and finally in the same day's mail, a card from the can company and a card from the Siloam Springs police chief arrived. The police chief had written, simply, "Come back and see me." When Owen returned to Siloam Springs, the police chief took him to a local cafe where they visited but never discussed salary. He was hired with a hand shake and assigned to the graveyard shift until there was a second shift opening. Owen worked for the Siloam Springs police department for seven years. He and Pat bought a home and had two daughters during those years.

It was 1966 when Owen was asked if he might be interested in running for Benton County sheriff. The Republican Party was looking for a candidate. There were politicians like Winthrop Rockefeller and John Paul Hammerschmidt running for office in Arkansas and Owen decided he would try to make a difference.

There was a $500 filing fee to get his name on the ballot. He was told if he wanted to file, they would "hold his check." He remembers being shocked by that and replied, "I'm not going to run for sheriff on a hot check."[2] Pat remembers going door to door, meeting and greeting people and passing out flyers.

Courtesy of Jauwana Owen Family Collection

Lee Owen in his Washington County Sheriff's uniform.

Lee Owen was 32 years old in 1966 when he was elected Benton County sheriff. He had beaten his opponent by 1,458 votes, countywide, but in his home town of Siloam Springs, he defeated his opponent by a 7 to 1 margin. In 1968, he was re-elected. During his time as Benton County sheriff, Owen built a reputation for honesty and hard work. He was the first republican sheriff in Benton County since Reconstruction. It had been 98 years.[3]

The local and state Republican Party supported Owen for an appointment as the United States Marshal for the Western District of Arkansas. In 1970, he received a call from President Richard Nixon's appointment secretary informing him that he had been appointed by the president and confirmed by the United States Senate to serve as United States Marshal. He received a congratulatory call from Congressman John Paul Hammerschmidt.

While serving as United States Marshal, Owen decided to further his education. He started at, then, Westark Community college and finished at Northeastern Oklahoma State University at Tahlequah, Oklahoma attending classes at nights and weekends. He graduated from Northeastern on his 41st birthday with a Bachelor of Science degree in criminal justice with a minor in Business.

In 1976, Pat and Lee Owen welcomed their third daughter and completed their growing family.

In 1978, Owen opened the United States probation and parole division, in the newly built John Paul Hammerschmidt Federal Building right off the square in Fayetteville.

Owen was involved in several civic organizations and was an active member with the Gideons, speaking at various churches every month. He also enjoyed music when he wasn't working and performed in various bands. In fact, in 1996 he released the first of two albums. He had 500 tapes produced and demos sent all over the country. When those were sold, 500 more were made. His first album had been Gospel, the second country. Two later albums he described as novelty and patriotic. He was co-

host of the Northwest Arkansas Song Writers group which met once a month. For 10 years, he and his band performed with various local musicians. One of the most successful American gospel song composers of the 20th century, Albert Brumley had Owen audition for him and copyrighted a song he'd written, "When this War is Over", sang by Jack Saxon under the Log Cabin Records label. Brumley gave Owen a lot of "encouragement and instruction."

In 1995, Owen retired from the United States parole division but on the same day was offered a job as captain of daytime operations with then Washington County sheriff, Kenneth McKee. For 10 years, he continued to work for Washington County and in May of 2004, was appointed by Governor Mike Huckabee to replace Sheriff Steve Whitmill, who had resigned to take another job. The new jail was completed and turned over to the county in November of 2004, and on December 1, the new jail was opened for training of officers and the maintenance crew.[4]

Owen retired in 2005 as Washington County Sheriff at 70 years of age, completing 48 years in law enforcement. He and his wife now reside in Fayetteville. Their two living daughters and grandchildren live in Farmington and Goshen. In 2014, he completed a song that shows his witty sense of humor and sums up what he thinks about the aging process we all go through. During one interview, Owen broke out singing this tune he wrote and sang for his family on his 80th birthday.

"Old Age Just Ain't Working Out" – Lee Owen[5]

Old age just ain't working out the way I had it planned,
I never dreamed when I got old, I'd need a helping hand.
I looked forward to that rockin' chair when life would be a breeze...
Now, when I start rockin', all I do is cough and sneeze!

Old age just ain't working out the way that it should be.
My vision sometimes is a blur and I can hardly see.

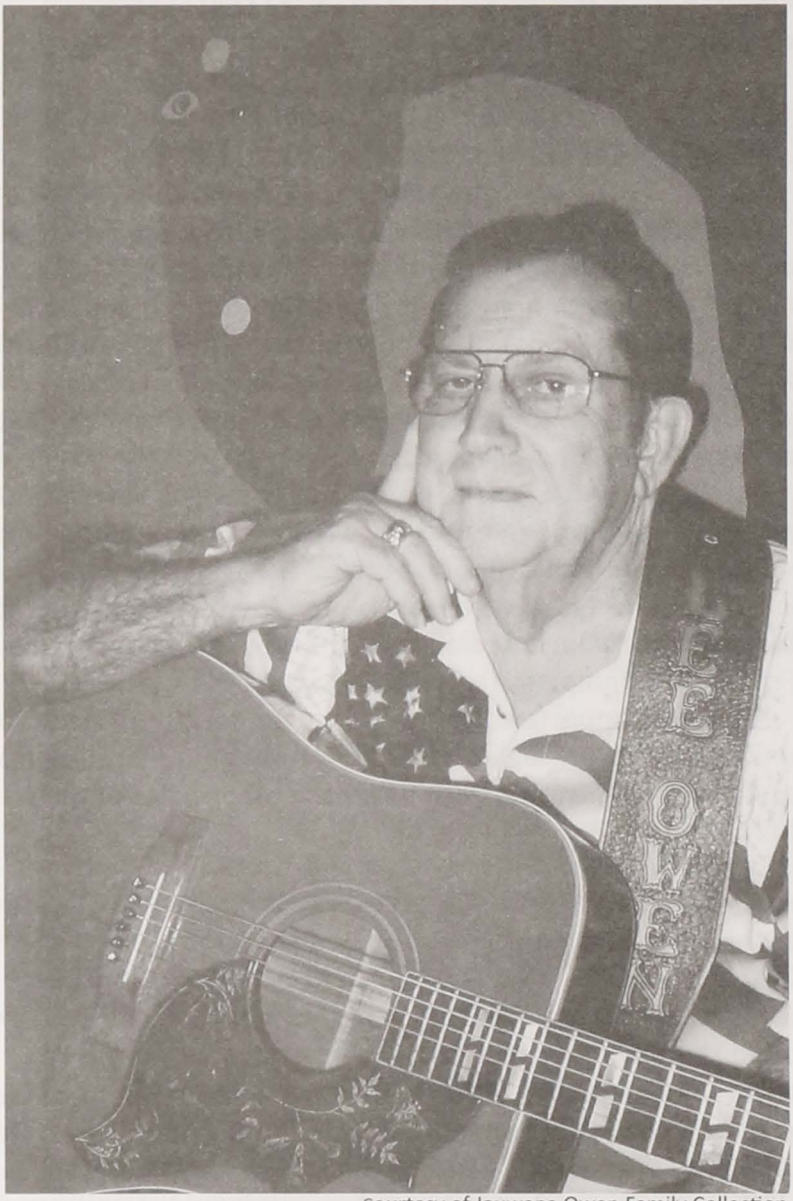
If I jump up too quick, the room begins to spin
And I sometimes sit and wonder which room am I in?

Old age just ain't working out when I'm at home alone.
Someone rings the doorbell and I pick up the phone.
By the time I figure out what I did was wrong,
The one that rang the doorbell has already gone!

Chorus
Old age problems, they keep haunting me
Old age problems, they won't let me be
If I can't turn this thing around, it's very plain to see,
This thing we call old age will be the death of me!!

Notes

1. Interviews with Sophia Estes, March and May, 2015.
2. Interview with Sophia Estes, March 2015.
3. Interview with Sophia Estes, May 2015.
4. Washington Co, AR: Sheriffs 1991-Present www.co.washington.ar.us.
5. ©Copyright, 2014, Lee Owen. Used by permission of author.



Courtesy of Jauwana Owen Family Collection

Lee Owen with his guitar.

Good Roads Committee Makes Plans to Build North-South Highway

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following stories from the *Fayetteville Daily Democrat* depict some of the early efforts 100 years ago to begin construction and improvements to the muddy wagon trail that ran from Springdale to Winslow and over the Boston Mountains to Alma, Van Buren and Fort Smith. Prior to highway numbers, highway supporters gave their grand routes names that might draw attention and funding.

The Lakes-to-the-Gulf Highway was drawn to run from Duluth, Minnesota, to Galveston, Texas. Competition among local communities to subscribe money for the route to go through their town affected the chosen route. The Jefferson Highway, which eventually included this route through Washington County, ran from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, to New Orleans.

For local supporters, not only was the terrain difficult, but supporters also perceived difficulty in obtaining funding from the state commensurate with how easy other parts of the state had it.

July 20, 1915

Good Roads Mass Meeting July 31

———

At a joint meeting Monday of the Good Roads Committee and the special committee appointed from the Business Men's Club to further Fayetteville's interest in the proposed Lakes-to-the-Gulf Highway, it was decided to make a call for a mass meeting of all residents along the proposed highway through Washington County, which would be through Winslow, West Fork, Green-

land, Fayetteville and Springdale, to be held at the Washington County Court House at one o'clock on the afternoon of Saturday, July 31, to give impetus to the movement.

Messrs. Duncan and Harris, of Winslow, were present at the meeting and reported an improvement district has already been organized for the purpose of constructing a road from Alma, Crawford County, to Winslow, on the south Washington County line. It has also reported petitions have already been secured and referred to the State Highway Department for the construction of roads in Benton County—one from Rogers to Pea Ridge, near the north eBnton [sic] County line and another from Rogers to Lowell, near the south Benton County line. It is the intention to cause a road to be constructed through Washington County to connect with those to be constructed in Benton and Crawford Counties, and for the roads in all three counties to connect with the Lakes-to-the-Gulf Highway.

July 27, 1915

7 Percent Ass'm't Would Build Road

L.R. Putman, a member of the committee appointed from the Business Men's Club for the purpose of promoting the organization of an improvement district extending from the north to the south line of Washington County through which it is planned to construct a road to connect with the Lakes-to-the-Gulf Highway, has prepared an estimate of the cost of the proposed road. In speaking of the means which it will be necessary to employ to construct the highway and its approximate cost, Mr. Putman said:

"A road from the Benton County line at a point South of Rogers to Winslow would be approximately 40 miles in length. A first class macadamized road could probably be built for $2500 per miles or $100,000 from Winslow to the Benton County line. The interest on a 20 year bond issue would be $50,000, making

1901 — The first bank, the Bank of Prairie Grove, opens. Also in 1901, a section of the Frisco Railroad line, the Ozark and Cherokee Central Railroad, begins running. The train depot is several blocks south of Main Street. The O&CCR train traveled from Fayetteville to Muskogee, Oklahoma.

ca. 1904— The Prairie Grove Canning and Evaporating Factory opens and processes fruits and vegetables, especially tomatoes. It's later renamed the Prairie Grove Canning Factory and hundreds of local people, including families and their children, are employed at the business until it closes in 1978.

1905 — Prairie Grove Public School graduates its first class with five students.

1906 — The downtown businesses on the north side of Buchanan Street are destroyed by fire. Water is unavailable, so dynamite is used to slow the flames, which shattered many windows of the businesses across the street.

1908 — The United Daughters of the Confederacy purchase nine acres of land where the Battle of Prairie Grove was fought with the intention of creating a park for Confederate veterans.

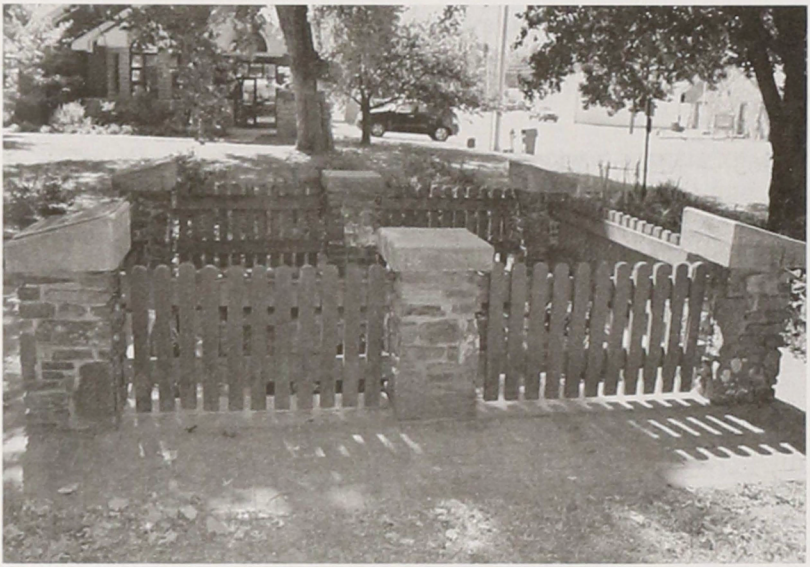
1911 — A new, three-story Public School building opens on the site of the old Prairie Grove Institute.

1931 — An additional school building for elementary students is built across the street on the south side of the existing school.

1935 — The Prairie Grove Public Library opens in the American Legion Hut. The librarian's salary is paid by the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

1942 — The railroad line and depot close in Prairie Grove.

1951 — The first school buildings on the current campus are completed.



The spring at Mock Park, enclosed by a picket fence, is cared for volunteers of the Master Gardeners, who take care of landscaping at the park. In the background of the picture above is the property where Tom Wagnon and Rev. Andrew Buchanan first settled.

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